

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4397

INFO AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 4749

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ES, HO

SUBJ: HONDURAS/EL SALVADOR: WHERE DO WE GO FRM HERE?

REF: STATE 247775

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

1. THE FOLLOWING ANALYSIS OF THE SALVADORAN POSITION AT THIS JUNCTURE SETS FORTH THE PARAMETERS WE MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT IN DEVISING STRATEGY FOR ADVANCING OUR INTEREST IN MAINTAINING THE MOMENTUM OF THE EL SALVADOR-HONDURAS BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS FOR SETTLEMENT OF THEIR SIPUTE.

2. THE SEPTEMBER 15-DECEMBER 15 FORMAL BILUTERAL NEGOTIATING CONFERENCE, WHICH CONCLUDED WITH AN INNOCUOUS COMMUNIQUE LEAVING THE POSSIBILITY OF FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS DELIBERATELY VAGUE, GAINED EL SALVADOR LITTLE OR NOTHING IN ITS QUEST FOR NOMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH HONDURAS (E.G., THE ROADS TO THE NORTH AND EAST ARE STILL CLOSED TO SALVADORAN TRAFFIC AND COMMERCE). HOWEVER, IT COST THE GOES LITTLE OR NOTHING ON THE DOMESTIC SIDE OR IN ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS OTHER NEIGHBORS (I.E., IT MADE NO COMMITMENTS TO SURRENDER

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TERRITORY OR TO ACCEPT SETTLEMENT PROCEDURES SUCH AS ARBITRATION

OR ADJUDICATION WHICH WOULD HAVE CAUSED GRAVE INTERNAL REPERCUSSIONS; AND ITS DENUNCIATION OF THE BOGOTA PACT WAS GREETED WITH INDIFFERENCE IN GUATEMALA, NICARAGUA, COSTA RICA, PANAMA AND MEXICO.)

3. THE NEGOTIATING CONFERENCE ALSO SERVED TO CONFIRM THAT THE OUTSTANDING ISSUE BETWEEN EL SALVADOR AND HONDURAS, WHICH SEEMINGLY DEFIES SETTLEMENT, IS THE UNDEFINED AND SIPUTED COMMON BOUNDARY. FURTHERMORE, AT HONDURAS' INSISTENCE, THE PRIOR SETTLEMENT OF THIS ISSUE IS A SINE QUO NON FOR NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS (AND, INCIDENTALLY, FOR HONDURAS' PARTICIPATION IN A RESTRUCTURED CENTRAL AMERICAN COMMON MARKET). SINCE BOTH SIDES ENMESSED THEIR BOUNDARY POSITIONS IN CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS AND HAVE EXPOUNDED THEM OPENLY TO THE POINT THAT THE CONTROVERSY EASILY AROUSES PATRIOTIC ZEAL, THEIR RESPECTIVE CLAIMS ARE MADE ALL THE MORE DIFFICULT TO RECONCILE.

4. IT SHOULD BE RECALLED THAT THE GOES WAS NEVER PARTICULARLY HAPPY WITH THE FORMALIZED NATURE OF THE NEGOTIATING CONFERENCE WITH DETAILED AGENDA AND TIMETABLE ESTABLISHED IN THE AUGUST 21 ACCORD, AND ACCEDED TO HONDURAS PROPOSAL FOR SUCH A PROCEDURE ONLY BECAUSE FONMIN BORGONOVO APPRECIATED FONMIN BATRES' DOMESTIC NEEDS AT THE TIME AND WANTED TO AVOID A BREAKDOWN IN DIRECT BILATERAL TREATMENT OF THE DISPUTE.

5. FOR THE FUTURE, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE GOES CONTINUES TO FAVOR BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS AND, INDEED, INSISTS THQK THIS IS THE PREFERRED, IF NOT THE ONLY, MEANS OF SETTLING THE DISPUTE. IT ALSO RECOGNIZED THAT AN AMBIENT CONDUCIVE TO NEGOTIATIONS MUST BE MAINTAINED AND THAT THIS MEANS, AMONG OTHER THINGS, PEACE ON THE BORDER BY ON-GOING CONTACTS OF THE TWO MILITARY COMMANDS AT ALL LEVELS TO AVOID MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND INCIDENTS. BEYOND THESE BASIC CONSIDERATIONS, THE GOES HAS A RANGE OF OPTIONS AT ITS DISPOSAL ON HOW TO PROCEED:
(A) IDEALLY, IT WOULD WAVT TO DEFER RESUMPTION OF NEGOTIATIONS UNTIL UFTER THE MARCH 1974 CONGVESSINAL/ MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS IN ORDER TO KEEP THE ISSUE OUT OF THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL ARENA. AFTER THE ELECTIONS, IT WOULD EXPECTEDLY WELCOME RENEWED BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS IF
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(1) PREFERABLY, THEY WERE PROPOSED BY A THIRD PARTY (E.G., THE MEXICAN "COORDINATOR" OR THE OAS COMMITTEE OF SEVEN.),
(2) THEY WERE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL, (3) THEY WERE CARRIED ON BY MEANS OF "INFORMAL" DIPLOMACY, AND (4) THEY WERE UNENCOMBERED BY PROCEDURES THAT WOULD COMMIT THE PARTIES TO SOME SETTLEMENTY FORMULA OUTSIDE THEIR CONTROL SHOULD THEIR TALKS AGAIN END INCONCLUSIVELY. (THE GOES WOULD BE LESS INSISTENT ON THE FIRST THREE CONDITIONS AFTER THE ELECTION, BUT SHOULD NOT BE

EXPECTED TO MAKE ANY CONCESSIONS ON THE FOURTH, EITHER BEFORE OR AFTER

THE ELECTIONS SINCE IT HAS WRAPPED THIS ONE IN ITS CONSTITUTION.)

(B) NEXT ON THE SCALE OF ACCEPTABLE OPTIONS WOULD BE RESUMPTION OF BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS DURING THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN. IF NEGOTIATIONS IN THIS PERIOD WERE STORNGLY-ADVOCATED BY A FRIENDLY THIRD PARTY WHOM THE GOES WOULD PREFER NOT TO REBUFF (E.G., ARANA OR SOMOZA), THE GOES WOULD PROBABLY ACCEDE TO A RENEWED DIALOGUE BEFORE MARCH 10. HOWEVER, THE CONSIDERATIONS OF CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORM-ALITY WOULD BE MUCH MORE IMPORTANT-THE LESS SAID AND AKNOWN ABOUT CONTACTS DURING THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN, THE BETTER. IN ANY EVENT, THE PROSPECTS FOR ANY FINAL SETTLEMENT OF THE DISPUTE DURING THIS SENSITIVE PERIOD WOULD SEEM QUITE REMOTE, UNLESS SOME UNFORSEE-ABLE MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH OCCURED, SINCE THE GOES WOULD BE LESS INCLINED TO MAKE CONCESSIONS.

(C) THE THIRD OPTION, THE RENEWAL OF A FORMALIZED, PUBLICIZED NEGOTIATINGPCONFERENCE PRIOR TO APRIL 1974, WOULD BE LEAST UCCEPT-ABLE TO THE GOEUN PERHAPS, EVEN TO THE POINT OF REBUFFING A FRIENDLY THIRD PARTY. THUS, IT SEEMS LET LIKELY THAT IT WOULD AGREE TO SOME SORT OF AN EXTENSION OF THE AUGUST 21 ACCORD AND THE RESUMPTION OF THE CONFERENCE IN MEXICO.

6. ALTHOUGH IT IS DIFFICULT FOR US TO APPRAISE THE HONDURAN POSITION AS JUXTAPOSED TO THE SALVADORAN, (AND WE LOOK TO EMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA FOR ASSISTANCE), WE OFFER THE FOLLOWING VIEWS BASED ON THE SIGNS THAT HAVE COME TO OUR ATTENTION. THE GOH WOULD BE AMENABLE TO A RESUMPTION OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH EL SALVADOR SO LONG AS THEY ARE NOT SUR-REPTITUOUS, (EVIDENTLY TO ALLAY PUBLIC CONCERN ABOUT WHO IS TRADING OFF WHAT), AND THEY ARE FORMAL, I.E., A CONFERENCE WITH AGENDA, DEADLINE AND IRON-CLAD PROCEDURES TO SETTLE UNRESOLVED ISSUES BY OTHER MEANS IF NEGTIATIONS

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FAIL. THE HONDURAN POSITION ON THE QUESTION OF TIMING OF NEW TALKS (BEFORE OR AFTERMARCH) AND SPONSORSHIP IS UNCLEAR TO US. HOWEVER, IF OUR INTERESTS ARE BEST SERVED BY OUR ATTEMPTING TO ASSURE THE ON-GOING MOMENTUM OF THE BILATERAL CONTACTS EVEN DURING THE NEXT FEW MONTHS (AND, PERHAPS, AT THE RISK OF A DEFINITIVE RUPTURE IF THE ISSUE REMAINS IR-RECONCILABLE BECAUSE THE GOES BELIEVES IT CANNOT MAKE CON-

CESSIONS DURING THIS PERIOD), IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE GOH WOULD HAVE TO GIVE SOMEWHAT ON ITS CONDITIONS FOR RENEWED NEGOTIATIONS (AS WE SEE THEM), IF THEY ARE TO BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE SALVADORANS.

7. EVEN IF THE BILATERAL TALKS ARE RENEWED UNDER SOME FORMULA DURING AND AFTER THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN HERE, WE SHOULD BEAR

IN MIND THE FACT THAT THE BOUNDARY SETTLEMENT ISSUE WILL REMAIN
A VERY TOQYH OBSTACLE. WE JUDGE IT UNLIKELY THAT THE MOLINA
GOVT WOULD BE VERY MUCH MORE FLEXIBLE ON THE ISSUE OF CEDING TERR-
ITORY OR ACCEPTING A FORMULA WHICH SEEKS SUCH A RESULT BEING

IMPOSED WHETHER AFTER THE ELECTIONS OR BEFORE THEM. AFTER ALL, IT IS
NOT SIMPLY THE PROSPECTS OF AN ELECTORAL DEFEAT IN AN OFF-YEAR
ELECTION THAT CONCERNS THE GOES (THAT CAN EASILY BE REMEDIED BY
SOME ADEPT VOTE COUNTING). RATHER, IT IS THE FEAR OF THE CONSEQUENCES

OF ANY SETTLEMENT THAT ENTAILS THE LOSS OF TERRITORY AND THE FIRM
BELIEF IN THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE GOVT ITSELF WOULD BE OVER-
THROWN AS A RESULT. THAT CONSIDERATION WILL REMAIN AS CLEARLY IN
THE MIND OF THE GOES LEADERSHIP AFTER THE ELECTIONS AS BEFORE THEM.
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